

Stop a Common Dog Killer

Intestinal blockages send thousands of dogs to the vet each year.

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Some dogs have abnormally shaped bowels prone to twisting or spontaneous intussusception (in which the intestine folds in on itself). Very rarely-in less than one percent of all emergency room cases-a twist or a blockage causes volvulus, a situation in which the intestine twists in on itself at an arterial inflow, cutting off blood supply. This can cause the intestine to atrophy and often results in death within a few hours. Treatment for this situation, if caught in time, includes surgical removal of the rotted intestine.

Action Equals Protection The good news is foreign-body blockages are preventable. The more you can control your dog's environment, the better the chances of stopping problems before they happen, Rawlings says. In extreme cases, such as dogs with pica, a rare condition that causes them to eat unusual objects uncontrollably, it may be necessary to keep your dog crated when she's alone and have her wear a cage muzzle on walks. Normally, however, it is sufficient to keep your dog's area free from objects that she can chew apart and swallow. The take-home message? The vast majority of blockages can be cured with prompt treatment-but without it, many are fatal.

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